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THE SHIP

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

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THE SHIP

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

ST. JOHN G. ERVINE

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TO

FLORENCE LAMONT

I wish to express my gratitude to Major W. A. Simnett, M.B.E., Royal Engineers, for the assistance he gave me in connexion with technical details of ship-building.

THE FIRST ACT

A room in John Thurlow's country house, near the shipbuilding town of Biggport.

THE SECOND ACT

The living-room of Jack Thurlow's farm.

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE I. Same as Act I.

SCENE II. A corner of the garden of John Thurlow's country house.

SCENE III. Same as Scene I.

Five months elapse between Acts I and II; three months between Acts II and III; five days between Scene I and Scene II, Act III; and a few hours between Scene II and Scene III, Act III.

The period is the immediate future.

CHARACTERS

OLD MRS. THURLOW.

JOHN THURLOW, her son, a shipbuilder.

JANET, his wife.

JACK, his son.

HESTER, his daughter.

CAPTAIN CORNELIUS.

GEORGE NORWOOD.

MAID.

THE FIRST ACT

The time is a Saturday afternoon in autumn, and the scene is laid in JOHN THURLOW'S *country house, chosen by him because it is easily accessible from his shipyard at Biggport. The room is handsomely furnished, without being conspicuously artistic, for the Thurlows are people of taste, conventional, perhaps, but not without the signs of well-marked individuality. Prominently displayed in the room are models of ships, one of a sixteenth-century man-of-war in full sail, the other of a quadruple-screw, coal-fed Atlantic liner of the type of the "Titanic." The pictures are mainly of industrial subjects, and* MR. THURLOW *is proud, and justly proud, of his excellent collection of etchings by Mr. Muirhead Bone, some of which represent scenes in the Biggport shipyard If we could see into the dining-room, we should discover large frescoes in the modern manner, showing the building of a ship from the laying of its keel to the time when it is ready to take its trial trip.*

The long windows leading to the garden are open, because the day is unexpectedly mild, and OLD MRS. THURLOW, *who is seated by the fire, likes the windows to be open whenever possible. She is an old woman, aged eighty-three, but she has no intention of yielding to her years. She can still read without glasses and her hearing is acute. People exclaim at her resistance to the infirmities of age, and Mr. Cobain, the Vicar, seldom omits to say that she is*

a wonderfully well-preserved old lady, a compliment which she hardly appreciates in those words because, so she says, it makes her feel like jam.

Her daughter-in-law, JANET THURLOW, *or* YOUNG MRS. THURLOW *as she is sometimes called to distinguish her from her mother-in-law, is seated by the tea-table on the other side of the fire, but not in such a position as to obscure* OLD MRS. THURLOW'S *view of the garden.* A MAID *is placing a tea-tray on the table, and* JANET THURLOW *is supervising the operation.* YOUNG MRS. THURLOW *is a soft, pliable woman, with one belief most firmly held, that happiness is only to be obtained in this world, and probably in the next, by those who never "make a fuss" about anything. She hates "bother," and successfully avoids it by rarely offering opposition to anyone, and then only to a lesser person in order to placate a greater one. Her family treat her as a dear and lovable, but totally unimportant, person; and since this treatment absolves her from a great deal of "fuss" and "bother," she is content. Her age is considerably less than that of her husband—"Just twenty years between us, my dear!" she always says, as if the roundness of the figure atoned for its size—for he, now sixty-two, married late in life.*

HESTER THURLOW, *her daughter, whose age is nineteen, is seen walking about the garden.* THE MAID *has placed the tray on the table, and* JANET *is now pouring out the tea.*

JANET. Thank you, Maggie! (*She turns and calls to her daughter.*) Tea, Hester!

HESTER. All right, mother! (*But she remains where she is*).

OLD MRS. THURLOW. When do you expect John, Janet?

JANET (*as she hands a cup of tea to* THE MAID). That's Mrs. Thurlow's! (THE MAID *carries it to* OLD MRS.

THURLOW.) My dear, I never expect John at any time. He's like the wind which bloweth where it listeth. (*Again to* HESTER.) Hester, your tea is getting cold, dear! (*To* OLD MRS. THURLOW.) There's nothing I dislike so much as tepid tea. (THE MAID *goes out.*)

HESTER (*entering*). All the flowers are nearly dead.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. The autumn's almost over, my dear!

HESTER (*taking a cup from the tray*). I hate to see them withering.

JANET. You should do what I do—pretend you don't see them.

HESTER (*sitting beside her grandmother*). But I can't help seeing them.

JANET. Oh, yes you can. Don't look!

HESTER. Do you know what train Jack's coming by, mother? I'd like to go and meet him.

JANET. No. He didn't say. (*To* OLD MRS. THURLOW.) He's like the wind, too.

HESTER. Perhaps he'll come with father and George in the car.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Is George coming to-day?

JANET. Yes. John and he are bringing home a model of the "Magnificent" to put along with those two over there. (*She indicates the other models by a turn of her head.*)

OLD MRS. THURLOW. George reminds me very much of your father, Hester, when he was a boy. Always thinking of ships! He ran away from school once to see a boat launched from the Yard, and your grandfather was going to thrash him for it, but I said he'd much better apprentice him to shipbuilding. I had great difficulty in making him consent—he wanted your father to be a minister like himself! . .

HESTER. I can't imagine father as a minister.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, dear, nor could I. The Yard was a very small one then. We little thought John would own it one day.

HESTER (*full of pride*). And now it's the biggest shipyard in the world.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*equally proud*). Yes, that's what your father has made of it.

HESTER. Isn't it funny that Jack doesn't seem very keen on shipbuilding. George likes the Yard much better than Jack does.

JANET. Nonsense, Hester! How can anyone help liking a thing which makes so much money?

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*holding her cup out*). May I have some more tea?

JANET. Hester, your grandmother's cup, please!

HESTER (*passing the cup on to her mother*). I wish father weren't so desperately anxious to have Jack in the Yard.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Jack's his only son, my dear.

HESTER. But that isn't Jack's fault, granny.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, but it's an explanation of your father's wish. A man likes to think of his work being carried on by his son.

HESTER. You didn't think so when father wanted to be a shipbuilder instead of a minister.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, my dear, that isn't quite true. But I've always thought that people ought to be allowed to find their own way as far as possible, and I don't like to see a young man compelled to give up his ambition for his father's.

JANET (*passing* OLD MRS. THURLOW'S *tea to her, via* HESTER). Anybody can like anything. It's all a question of making up your mind and not being fussy. For years and years I couldn't eat tomatoes. Then I said to myself, "This is ridiculous, this . . . this prejudice against tomatoes!" and I forced myself to eat them, although I was sick twice, and now I'm really quite fond of them.

[*The door opens, and* JACK THURLOW *enters. He is a good-looking, honest, humourless, rather priggish lad of twenty-one. He is dressed with*

that cultivated carelessness which is characteristic of the young man in revolt against convention. His clothes are of rough tweed, but the tailoring is good, and, although he would be very indignant if he were told so, he takes as much trouble with his artistic tie as a fashionable fop takes with his.]

JANET and HESTER (*simultaneously*). Jack!!

JACK. I thought I'd surprise you.

HESTER (*meeting him half-way and embracing him*). Why didn't you tell us what train you were coming by, and then I'd have met you?

JACK. I didn't know myself until the last minute. I intended to go and find father and have a chat with him—he isn't home yet, is he?

HESTER. No, not yet.

JACK. And then I changed my mind and came down by myself. (*He goes to* JANET *and kisses her.*) Any tea, mother?

JANET. I'll get some more. Hester, darling, ring the bell, will you?

[HESTER *does so, while* JACK *greets his grandmother.*]

JACK. How are you, granny? (*Kisses her.*)

OLD MRS. THURLOW. All the better for seeing you, my dear. Sit here beside me and tell me what you did in France.

[*He sits beside her*

HESTER (*seating herself near them*). Yes, do, Jack Your letters hardly told us anything.

[THE MAID *enters.*

JANET. Some fresh tea for Mr. Jack, Maggie.

MAID (*taking the tea-pot*). Yes, ma'am. (*Exit.*)

JACK. I don't know that I did so very much, granny but I thought a good deal. I—I reviewed my whole life.

JANET. My dear boy, how could you? You were only there three weeks.

JACK. Yes, but I thought very hard. I felt discontented, mother, and I asked myself a great many questions.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Did you get any answers, my dear?

JACK. Well, yes, granny, I think so. The final answer depends upon father to a great extent. When is he coming home?

JANET. My dear, nobody ever knows when your father is coming home, least of all me.

HESTER. Did mother tell you that the Queen is going to launch the "Magnificent?"

JANET. Of course I told him, Hester. As if I'd forget a thing like that. (THE MAID *returns with the tea-pot.*) Ah, here's the tea! Thank you Maggie!

[THE MAID *puts the pot on the table and goes out.*]

HESTER. I'm so glad the Queen is coming on Monday. George says father is sure to get a title.

JANET. I wonder if he ought to take it. People are so suspicious of titles, even if they are taken innocently.

JACK. I don't suppose father wants one. Titles are all right for people who haven't got anything else to justify their existence.

JANET. Oh, darling, don't be so cynical. If your father were to receive a peerage, you'd be the Honourable John Thurlow. (*Passing his cup to him.*) Here's your tea! And you, Hester, you'd be the Honourable Hester Thurlow. (*Reflectively, as if she were tasting the title.*) It sounds rather nice. The Honourable Hester Thurlow! . . . Well, if the King offers a peerage to your father, my dears, I shall advise him to accept it for your sakes. Parents should always put their children's wishes before their own. Did I give you any sugar, Jack?

JACK. Yes, thank you, mother.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. What sort of questions did you ask yourself in France, Jack?

JACK. All sorts, granny. Questions about myself and father and the Yard and . . . God!

JANET. God! I don't quite see the connection, darling.

JACK. Don't you, mother? I do. You do, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I can understand you seeing it, Jack.

JACK. I just reviewed my whole position, mother. What am I doing in this world? What am I here for? What's the good of me? What's God got to do with me? Things like that!

JANET. I never ask myself such questions. I should feel as if I were taking a liberty.

JACK. But, mother, a man has to ask himself such questions if he's going to understand life at all.

JANET. It isn't necessary to understand life. All you've got to do is to live it.

JACK. What I want to get at is this. Here's God and here am I! . . . (*He indicates points on the floor.*)

JANET. Darling! On the hearth-rug, too!

JACK. I'm not trying to be funny, mother. Am I, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, dear. But go on. I'm impatient to hear what judgment you passed on God.

JACK (*rebuffed*). Oh, now you're making fun of me, too.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*patting him affectionately*). No, I'm not, Jack. But young men nowadays pull very long faces, and really, dear, it isn't necessary.

JACK. But we've got to find out about things, granny.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I know, but you needn't make your enquiries as if you suspected the worst.

JACK. It's awful when you look at the world and see what a mess it's in.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I remember hearing Thomas Carlyle say something like that. He was very ill, poor man,

JACK. Everything seems all wrong.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. And are you going to put everything right, my dear?

JACK. I want to do what I can.

JANET. You'll be very busy, darling.

JACK (*rising and standing with his back to the fire*). I've thought it all out, and it seems to me, granny that I've got to begin with myself.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. That's a great improvement on most reformers, Jack, who generally want to begin on other people.

JACK. Well, I'm going to begin with myself. The rest ought to be easy. (*The boy's sincerity transcends his priggishness as the speech proceeds.*) When I was in France, granny, I went up to part of the devastated area—along the valley of the Somme, from Albert up to Bapaume and Peronne—and I thought how horrible it was that all those decent chaps went out to the War, full of chivalry and idealism, and then came back, disillusioned and embittered. I used to wonder why the men who went to the War were so cynical about women and politics and England—about everything. And now I think I know. They feel as if they'd been crucified and buried, but hadn't risen again. It must have been ghastly to go through the things they suffered, and then come home to all the old things made worse. Well, I suppose they're done for, poor devils. They've lost hope and faith, and they just don't care any more about anything. But I've got all my hope, granny, and I want to see if people like me can't put things right—more right than they are now. I know this sounds frightfully priggish, but I can't help that. I feel that each one of us has got to begin here. (*He touches his breast as he speaks.*)

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Have you found out yet what is right?

JACK. I think so. We're all too artificial. We've got to lead a more natural life! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. The first people to say that, my dear, were Adam and Eve, and the result was that they were put out of the Garden of Eden.

JANET. If I'd been Eve I should simply have refused to go. I always thought she was a little too acquiescent.

JACK. I used to watch the peasants working in the fields in France, and while I was watching them I suddenly realized what I've often suspected, that the cause of all our troubles is machinery!

JANET. Machinery!

HESTER. What on earth do you mean?

JACK. Machines defile people. A man in a factory isn't a man. He isn't even a machine—he's the servant of a machine. Think of all the factories in Biggport pouring their muck into the river, and then think of what the river must have been like before the factories were built! Well, everything in the world now is like that. When I was in the devastated area, I realized that a machine-driven world could never be anything else but hideous, that it must become more and more hideous. All those beautiful fields, so carefully cultivated by the peasants, were smashed and ripped and brutally defiled by machinery, and the only people who were doing anything to restore them to life again were the peasants working with their hands.

JANET. My dear, you're talking like Tolstoy.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I don't think machines matter much, Jack. It's people who matter. Guns don't usually go off by themselves, and anyhow a peasant's spade is a machine.

JACK. I know that we must have machinery in our lives, but I protest against this servitude to machines. Nobody gets any fun out of his work now. We're all machine-minders or loafers.

HESTER. But, Jack, you're working with your hands now—in the Yard.

JACK. I'm going to leave the Yard.

HESTER and OLD MRS. THURLOW (*simultaneously*). Leave the Yard!!

JACK. Yes.

JANET. But you can't leave it. Your father won't let you. And the Queen coming on Monday, too!

JACK. Father's big ships are just as wrong as the Biggport factories. I object to these floating hotels, as he calls them, because they make the sea like a dirty, neurotic, modern city.

JANET. That's just sentimentality, Jack. A modern city isn't half so dirty as the mediæval cities were. I know. I've read all about it in Mr. Wells's History of the World. We don't have plagues! . . .

JACK. Or poems. The mediæval people may not have had good drains, mother, but they had great poets.

JANET. Well, I may be a Philistine, but I'd rather be sanitary than be inspired. "Romeo and Juliet" would be very little consolation to me if I were suffering from smallpox. I often think it would have done Shakespeare good if he'd been less exalted and more hygienic, living that stuffy life in Stratford. And if there'd been more machinery in his day, there wouldn't be any doubt about who wrote his plays. We'd know.

JACK. Perhaps there wouldn't be any plays.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, yes, there would, my dear. One's difficulty with a genius is, not how to encourage him, but how to keep him in order. I think you mother's right.

HESTER. What are you going to do when you leave the Yard, Jack?

JACK. I talked the subject over with a man I met in France. His name's Cornelius, and he's an ex-officer, rather at a loose end. He'll come into partnership with me in a farm, and I want father to give me the money! . . .

JANET. You're going to be a farmer!

JACK. Yes, mother. I want to grow things.

JANET. You know you're simply flying in the face of Providence—to say nothing of your father!

JACK. That's another point. I've realized for some time past that father has a much stronger will than I have, and in the Yard I'm simply a sounding-board for his opinions. I seem to have no will of my own there—just his will. You understand me, don't you, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I think so, dear. But I wonder whether it isn't better to express the will of greater people than ourselves than to insist on expressing our own.

JACK. No, no, granny, no! Let's each express our own will.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. There'd be frightful confusion if we did, Jack.

JACK. Well, confusion is better than slavery. I have a right to my own life and thoughts, but I can't have them under father. He's too much for me.

JANET. Nonsense, Jack. I've been married to your father for twenty-two years, and I've proved that it's quite easy to get on with him. Just do what he tells you, and he's perfectly reasonable.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. My dear, you're very young and I'm very old, and sometimes I think that the very old understand the very young better than anyone else, because you're so near the beginning and we're so near the end. I want you to believe that I'm trying to understand your point of view when I say it's better to go on than to go back! . . .

JACK. Not always, granny!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, but nearly always. People like your father haven't finished their work—they're only midway through it. But you think, because you see the confusion of a half-completed job, that it's a bungled job. You said something just now about the bitterness which fills the young men who came back from the War, but you don't seem to realize that an ideal which cannot survive a blow! . . .

JACK. A terrible blow, granny

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, dear, a very terrible

blow, but surely the only ideal worth having is the one which survives all blows? To me, the most wonderful thing in the world is not the young man beginning life with ideals—we all do that—but the old man dying with them undiminished. So few do that. Your father's an idealist—oh, yes, he is—with a passion for ships. He has suffered many blows to his faith in ships, but he's kept his faith. Whenever he was knocked down, he got up again. My son will never give in to anything, and if I were a boy I should be proud to serve such a man.

JACK. But I don't believe in his faith, granny. I don't believe in it!

[*The door opens, and* THE MAID *enters.*

MAID. The master and Mr. Norwood have just come, ma'am. They've got a big case with them.

[*Before* JANET *can make any reply to this announcement,* JOHN THURLOW *enters.* THE MAID *retires.* JOHN THURLOW *is a tall, bearded man, aged sixty-two, deliberate in his ways, but very definite and authoritative in speech. He is affectionate in a manner that is almost condescending, and, in spite of his appearance of coolness, is full of possessive fury which ranges from great passion to mere sentimentality. His love for his mother is very marked: he even uses a different and gentler tone in speaking to her than he uses in speaking to the others.*]

JOHN. Hester! . . . Hilloa, Jack, you back again?

JACK (*from whom some of the confidence has now evaporated*). Yes, father.

JOHN. Well, go and help George, will you? We've brought home the model of the "Magnificent," and it's too heavy for him alone.

JACK (*going towards the door*). Very good, father.

JOHN (*as Jack passes him*). Had a good holiday?

JACK. Yes, thank you. (*Exit.*)

JOHN (*as he kisses his wife*). He looks well, doesn't he?

JANET. Yes. Have you had any tea, John?

JOHN (*kissing Hester, who has gone to him*). I don't want any, thanks. (*To* HESTER.) Well, young woman, what do you want?

HESTER. Nothing, daddy.

JOHN. God bless my soul, child, are you ill?

HESTER (*with a pout*). Oh, daddy!

JOHN (*putting her aside and going to his mother*). Do you hear that, mother? Hester has got everything she wants. Lucky girl!

HESTER. Daddy, you aren't a bit funny when you try to be.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, my dear, my dear, you mustn't be disrespectful to your parents' wit. Humour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

JOHN (*sitting beside his mother*). And what have you been doing to-day?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Thinking about you, my dear.

JOHN. Well, you couldn't have employed your time better. Could she, Hester?

HESTER. Father, you are a conceited old man! . . .

JOHN. Ummmm, not so very old, my dear, not so *very* old! Why, your granny's only eighty-three. That's all, mother. (OLD MRS. THURLOW *pats him affectionately.*) And everybody knows eighty-three's nothing. Never had an ache in your life, had you?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Only those you caused me John.

JOHN. That's a nice thing to say! . . . (*The door is opened by* THE MAID *to admit* JACK *and* GEORGE.) Ah, here comes the "Magnificent!"

[*He goes half-way towards the door to meet* JACK *and* GEORGE NORWOOD, *who enter in that order, carrying a model of the "Magnificent" between them. It is a glass case, and is about four feet long. The "Magnificent" is unlike any ship now sailing the sea. It has not got any funnels or*

masts, for example, but has ventilation shafts where funnels would ordinarily be, and trellis-work poles used chiefly for wireless telegraphy where masts might be expected. The principal differences between her and, say, the "Olympic" are not outwardly observable. To eyes accustomed to coal-fed liners she looks unfinished, ugly even.]

JOHN (*indicating the table in the centre of the room*) Put her down here. Gently, gently! . . . (*as* JACK *seems to stumble*).

JACK. She's heavy. (GEORGE *and he put the model on the table.*) Isn't she, George?

[GEORGE NORWOOD, *aged twenty-four, is a firm-willed young man, older in mind than he is in years, with plenty of imagination in shipbuilding, but very little in anything else. He regards* JOHN THURLOW *with feelings akin to idolatry.*]

GEORGE. Oh, I don't think so. (*The idolatrous young man would gladly strain himself lifting the model of any boat built by* JOHN THURLOW.) She doesn't feel heavy to me. I could have carried her in myself, only the Chief wouldn't let me. He said I might hurt myself, Mrs. Thurlow (*this is to* JANET), but really he was afraid I might drop her! He wasn't thinking of me. Were you, Chief?

JOHN (*to his mother*). That's how these brats in the Yard talk to me, mother. They think I've got a swelled head because I've built the swiftest ship in the world, and so they try to take me down a peg or two. Some of them think they can build ships better than I can!

GEORGE. Oh, no, we don't sir. If we can build them we as well as you do, we'll feel content.

JOHN. Will you? If you don't build 'em better than I do, you won't be worth a damn. Will they, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No dear.

JOHN. What will be the good of me dying to make room for you fellows if you don't improve on me? (*He turns to his mother.*) Come and have a look at her, mother. (*He gives his arm to* OLD MRS. THURLOW *and leads her to the model.*) Isn't she a beauty?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, she's a bonny boat.

JANET. But she hasn't got any funnels.

JOHN. No, my dear, she hasn't. We've abolished funnels. They belong to the Dark Ages when people burned coal. We burn oil.

HESTER (*pointing to the ventilation shafts*). But aren't those funnels, daddy?

GEORGE (*eager to explain to her*). No, Hester, those are the ventilators. These poles are principally for wireless telegraphy, but they will serve any useful purpose that a mast serves.

JANET. I think she looks ugly—as if she hadn't any clothes on.

JOHN. Ugly! She's beautiful. Isn't she, mother? (*He does not wait for a reply.*) You're like everybody else, Janet. You say a thing's ugly until you get used to it, and then you think anything that's different from it is hideous. If you'd seen the first real steamship you'd have thought her ugly because she wasn't like that old sailing-ship there! (*He indicates the man-of-war.*)

JANET. Well, she may be very wonderful, but I think she looks ugly.

JOHN. Looks! What are looks compared with action? There isn't a ship in the world that can go through the water as the "Magnificent" will. Look at her shape! Not an inch of wasted space in her. I reckon I know something about æsthetics, and I say that boat's beautiful. Do you see her keel? In coal-fed boats that space was wasted—full of bilge-water—and all this space above it was occupied by bunkers full of coal, difficult to stow and shift, and filthily dirty. And what else had you? Boilers and furnaces, taking up a tremendous amount of room. Waste space, all

of it! Well, I've changed all that. I put oil where the bilge-water used to go, poured into the ship cleanly through a hose-pipe, and I put passengers where the coal-bunkers used to be. This ship will be able to replenish her fuel from oil-ships at sea. Think of that! She'll carry three thousand passengers and land them in New York four days after she leaves Southampton.

HESTER. She isn't as big as I thought she'd be, daddy.

JOHN. No, she's not big. I don't believe in big ships. Big ships mean big harbours and trouble in turning.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Won't the going be rough, John?

JOHN. No, mother. She'll do twenty-eight knots an hour without a quiver. George, I believe she'll do over thirty, without much shaking—not any more than you'd get on a Cunarder or a White Star.

GEORGE. I think you're right, sir!

JOHN (*to* OLD MRS. THURLOW). Of course, George really thinks that oil-fed ships are obsolete already. Don't you, George? He's all for electricity! . . .

GEORGE. That'll come, sir. Oil's too dear and too difficult to get.

JOHN. Well, that'll have to be your job in the world, George, yours and Jack's. My business is with oil-driven ships. Isn't it disgusting to think that some of the best oil-wells in the world are in the hands of a lot of damned Arabs? I can't imagine why the Lord wanted to put 'em in the Garden of Eden. If He'd only had the sense to put 'em in the neighbourhood of Southampton! . . .

JANET. John, John, dear! That is not the way to speak of the inscrutable designs of Providence. Before Hester, too!

JOHN. The next thing I'm going to do, mother, is to abolish pilots. In a year or two, this boat will be steered by wireless telegraphy. Some fellow sitting

in an office in New York will guide her along a perfectly straight course into her berth. Lord, isn't it wonderful what progress we've made with boats? A hundred years ago, there weren't any steamships, and now we've got the "Magnificent."

[*While he is speaking, they return to their places, except* HESTER *and* GEORGE *who remain by the model.* JACK *goes to the window and shuts it.*]

JANET. Supposing she were to sink! . . .

JOHN. Don't be silly, Janet! She can't sink. She's unsinkable. You could dig a hole in her side as high as a house and she wouldn't sink.

GEORGE (*illustrating from the model.*) You see, Mrs. Thurlow, we can isolate any part of her in a few seconds by pressing a lever here on the bridge.

JOHN. We've got the sea under control at last, Janet. I think I will have some tea.

JANET. Oh, John, you are provoking! Why couldn't you say so when I asked you before?

JOHN. I didn't want it then, but I want it now. You'll have some, George, won't you?

GEORGE. Well, thanks, if you're having some! . . .

JOHN. Right! (THE MAID *enters.*) Oh, here is Maggie! Maggie, bring up some more tea. Indian tea, and very strong. None of that wishy-washy China stuff!

MAID. Yes, sir. (*Exit.*)

JOHN. I like to taste the tannin in my tea. Well, Jack, how's France? I hope you're glad to get home again.

JACK. Yes, father, I am.

JOHN. I hope the French people knocked some of the notions out of your head. Eh? (JACK *laughs a little nervously.*) It's time you settled down, my boy, and got rid of cranky ideas. When did you get back?

JACK. Only a little while ago.

JOHN. Oh! Why didn't you come down to the

Yard? You could have motored home with George and me . . . and the "Magnificent." (*Suddenly, as if remembering a thing forgotten.*) Damn!

HESTER. Father, you swear like a flapper!

JOHN. George, we forgot to stop at Sandersons'.

GEORGE. So we did. I ought to have remembered. Shall I go back again?

JOHN. Yes, do.

JANET. But he hasn't had any tea, poor thing!

JOHN. He doesn't want any tea. Take the car, George. You'll be back in half-an-hour.

HESTER. I'll come too.

GEORGE. Oh, good!

HESTER. Go and get the car ready, while I put on my hat and coat. The garden's the quickest way.

GEORGE (*as he goes out by the windows which* JACK *opens for him*). Right you are!

[HESTER *goes out by the door, as* JACK *closes the windows behind* GEORGE.]

JOHN. That girl orders George about as if she owned him.

JANET. I think they're very suited to each other.

JOHN. What's that?

JANET. George and Hester! I think they're very suited to each other.

JOHN. I daresay, but George oughtn't to think of marriage for a long time yet. He's got a lot of work to do before he gets married. And Hester's young. She can wait.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. People say it's better to marry young, John.

JOHN. No, it isn't, mother. Marriage makes young men timid and careful just when their adventurous quality is most useful. I didn't get married until I was . . . What age was I, Janet?

JANET. Forty. You were forty and I was twenty. I sometimes wish you'd been younger, John.

JOHN. Why?

JANET. Well! . . . Oh, I don't know!

JOHN. Of course you don't. I was exactly the right age for you. Every man ought to be twenty years older than his wife. If he doesn't start off with that advantage, what hope has he of keeping her in order? If I had married when I was George's age, I shouldn't have been able to concentrate my mind on my work. I soon realized that, and so I put marriage clean out of my thoughts until I was sure of my position. Then I looked around and I saw you, Janet, and my mind was made up in a moment (*He sits on the arm of her chair and fondles her.*) You were very young and pretty and timid when I first knew you.

JANET (*all aglow*). Oh, John, I wasn't timid.

JOHN. Oh, yes, you were! That's why I liked you. You remember, don't you, mother, how I came home and told you about her?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I do, indeed. You said to me, "Mother, that girl's afraid of me. I shall marry her."

JOHN. That's right. And so I did. And I'm not sorry.

[*He kisses* JANET. JACK *gets up and goes towards the garden during this speech. As he passes the chair where his parents are,* JOHN *catches hold of him by the arm.*]

JOHN. Well, Jack?

JACK. Well, father?

JOHN. You're not in love, I hope.

JACK. No, father. (*Then with an effort.*) Father, I want to say something to you.

JOHN (*getting up*). Yes, my boy. Shall we go upstairs?

JACK. I've been telling granny and mother about it already.

JOHN. Oh! You haven't been getting into a mess, have you?

JACK. No, father! . . .

JOHN. Well, you look damned solemn! What's up?

JACK. You know what I think of things—what you call my cranky notions.

JOHN (*with comic despair*). Oh, yes, indeed I do.

JACK. Well, father, I'm serious about them. I'm not just a crank. I've thought things out, and I . . . I want to leave the Yard.

JOHN. Leave the Yard! What do you mean?

JACK. I want to leave it for good.

JOHN. Oh! And may I ask why?

JANET. Jack thinks there's something wrong with the principle of the Yard.

JACK. It isn't only the Yard, father. It's the whole mechanical civilization. All these big factories and mills and workshops are all wrong! . . .

JOHN. Oh, that stuff again! I thought you'd got over that.

JACK. I know you think I'm a fool, father. You've never taken me very seriously, but I'm in earnest. I hate this servitude to machines. It's degrading.

JOHN. I don't know what the devil you're talking about. Do you understand him, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I understand a great many things, John, of which I do not approve.

JOHN. Well, what does he mean?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Jack's a reactionary! . . .

JACK. No, granny! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, yes, my dear, you are. You condemn all that mankind has done for more than a century because you don't like the look of it. And you've persuaded yourself to believe that a man who spends his life ploughing fields is somehow enjoying a better life than a man in a factory. Perhaps he is, although I've not noticed that peasants are any more noble-minded than other people. But, my dear, you're making a very great mistake if you think that mankind is going to scrap your fathers' ships! . . .

JOHN. Scrap my ships! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*rebuking him*). Hush, John! I am speaking.

JOHN (*abashed*). I beg your pardon, mother!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. We've got to go on, Jack. It isn't any good arguing about progress, for that depends very largely on the person who is making it. I dare-say most of us mean well, but I'm old-fashioned enough to think that we ought to leave our affairs in the hands of our betters.

JACK. But who are our betters, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Those who prove themselves to be. We can't all be great, my dear, but we should try to recognize those who are. My son is a great man.

JACK. I know that, granny, but a man can be great and wrong at the same time. You're wrong, father! All the people who make men less than machines are wrong. I'm not clever enough to prove it to you, but can't you see that this mania for bigness, these big cities, big engines, and big empires are destroying human beings. We can't feed ourselves in England now, in spite of our progress, and when the next war comes, we'll starve to death in the midst of magnificent machines.

JOHN. Wait a minute! I don't quite get the hang of this Do you think this boat is all wrong, as you say?

JACK. Yes, father!

JOHN. Oh! And why?

JACK. She's a luxury ship. All your improvements are simply to provide more luxuries for the passengers. Swimming-baths and theatres and cafes and cinemas and libraries and daily newspapers and ball-rooms and magnificent private suites for millionaires. That's all! The men who used to work that ship (*he points to the war-vessel*) were sailors, but you've abolished sailors, father, and put swimming-bath attendants in their place. I don't call it progress to take a decent seaman and turn him into a waiter, cadging for tips,

JANET. I don't approve of the tipping system—no woman does—but I don't see why people shouldn't be comfortable at sea, just where they need it most.

JACK. Well, that's what I think. It doesn't matter to me whether the "Magnificent" is the swiftest and most comfortable ship in the world if the men she carries aren't worth carrying. I'm for men against machines from this on. That's what I mean, father.

JOHN. I see.

JACK. So I'm going to leave the Yard.

JOHN. Yes?

JACK. And try to discover a better way of living.

JOHN. Oh, yes!

JACK. I thought perhaps you'd understand my point of view, father.

JOHN (*with rising fury*). Your point of view! Do you understand mine?

JACK. I try to understand you, father! . . .

JOHN. Do you see that ship? (*He points to the model of the "Magnificent."*) She's just a machine to you—a luxury-ship. Eh? That's so, isn't it? Isn't it?

JACK. Yes, father.

JOHN. Do you know what she is to me? No! That doesn't occur to you. You can stand there and . . . and insult my boat! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John, dear!

JOHN. No, mother, no. (*To* JACK.) I love this boat. My whole life and soul have gone into her. And you make little of her, call her a luxury-ship, a machine. But she's something more than a machine, Jack, She's a living, breathing thing. Why, a ship is as sensitive as a young girl. And this beautiful thing that I've made—my God, how dare you insult my ship!

JACK. I have a right to my opinions, father.

JOHN. Your opinions! There are too many opinions in the world, and yours isn't much better than most of them. On your own ground of argument, my

boat is doing a great work! She's helping to make people friendly by bringing them together and making neighbours of them.

JACK. You don't make people friendly, father, just by making neighbours of them.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. We've certainly fought more wars with France than we have with Patagonia, and I sometimes think we could live more happily with the Irish if they were further away.

JOHN. I don't understand this kind of talk. It's enough for me that my ships are good ships. You intend to leave the Yard, Jack—to have nothing more to do with it?

JACK. Yes.

JOHN. And when I die, who's going to carry it on?

JACK. Someone else will have to do that, if it's to be carried on.

JOHN. You don't see my point, Jack. A Thurlow made this ship and made the Yard where she was built. A Thurlow raised it from nothing to be the greatest shipyard in the world. We have a name, and I made that name.

JACK. Yes, father, I realize that.

JOHN. I want that name maintained. You talk about understanding things. Do you understand the pride I had in creating the Yard, and my desire that my son and my son's son should continue it and make it greater than I made it? Do you understand that? When you were born, the first thought that came into my head was that you'd build ships as I'd built them. I didn't think of you as a child: I thought of you as a shipbuilder—the head of Thurlow's! . . .

JACK. I've never wished to build ships, father.

JOHN. What has your wish got to do with it? You're my son to whom I pass on my work as I pass on my life.

JACK. But I'm not only your son. I'm myself I have a right to my own life.

JOHN. No one has any right to his life. No one in the world has a right to his life. Haven't you learned that yet? What *do* you want to do—if you leave the Yard?

JANET. He wants to buy a farm.

JOHN. A farm!

JACK. Yes, father. I want to go on the land with a friend of mine.

JOHN. And you want me to give you the money for it, eh?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. He hasn't any of his own, John.

JOHN. No. NO. Not one half-penny! You've got to come back to the Yard, Jack.

JACK. I can't father.

JOHN. You've got to, my boy.

JACK. Won't George do?

JOHN. You're my son. George isn't. I want you.

JACK. Is that why? Because I'm your son.

JOHN. Yes.

JACK. Then I won't go back.

JOHN. You'll do what I tell you.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Is that wise, John?

JOHN. I don't care whether it is or not. I will have a Thurlow at the head of Thurlow's.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. It's foolish, my dear, to force the right opinions on the wrong people.

[*The door opens, and* HESTER *enters.*

HESTER. Father, do come for a drive. George's got the car at the door, and he wants to say something to you.

JOHN. Why can't he come here and say it?

HESTER. Well, he thinks he'll feel more confident in the open air. As a matter of fact, daddy, he wants to marry me.

JOHN. Then tell him the answer's "No."

HESTER. Don't be silly, father! I've just told him that it's "Yes." Come and cheer him up. He looks frightfully miserable.

JANET. If you hadn't prevented him from having his tea, John, this wouldn't have happened.

HESTER. Oh, yes, it would, mother. Come along, daddy!

[*She goes out.*

JOHN. Jack, my boy, don't let's quarrel. You see, you're my son, and I . . . I love you. That's why George won't do. (*He goes out.*)

JACK I can't stand up to him, granny! I can't stand up to him.

JANET. Then why try?

JACK. I must think for myself, mother. I can't stay here and be dominated like this.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. It's very wrong to make people do things they don't want to do, even when those things are right. Very wrong. I've always believed that if a man wanted to go to hell and were compelled to go to heaven, he'd end by turning heaven into hell. Very wrong! *Very* wrong! Your views, Jack, are rather silly, but no one can make you realize how silly they are so well as you can. It is a pity you don't like ships . . . very beautiful things, ships . . . but since you don't and your father won't give you the money to buy your farm, I'm afraid I shall have to give it to you.

JACK (*eagerly*). You will, granny?

JANET. My dear, you mustn't. John will be very angry.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I'm too old now to mind whether people are angry with me or not. I spent most of my life in helping John to get his desire. I think I must spend the rest of it in helping Jack to get his. That's the chief thing, isn't it, to get your desire, even when it disappoints you.

JACK (*kneeling beside her*). Granny, dear!

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*patting him gently*). My poor little boy!

THE SECOND ACT

The scene is laid in what was formerly the kitchen of a comfortable farmhouse: a large, airy, well-lit room now chiefly used as a combined sitting- and dining-room. It is furnished in the bare, austere and self-conscious fashion which is characteristic of the various Peasant Crafts societies and organisations for the revival of medievalism in rural districts. There is the maximum of artistic oddity and the minimum of comfort, for the designer of the furniture was obsessed by the idea that peasants, when they made things in a clumsy, inefficient manner, did so, not because they were inexpert, but to express some deeply felt, though not clearly articulated, theory about art. The tables and chairs are not polished or stained in any way. The plain, unvarnished wood, like the plain, unvarnished truth (about which we hear so much, of which we hear so little) is good enough for the Peasant Crafts societies. The floor is uncarpeted, the only concession to the mollycoddled being an occasional mat. The curtain have stencilled designs on them, and are quite pretty.

The time is five months after the date of the first act, and the signs of spring can be seen through the windows and the door when it is opened. The day is Sunday, and the work of the farm, therefore, is more or less at a standstill. That is why JACK THURLOW *is able to sit at a small writing-table*

in one of the windows, smoking a pipe as he composes a letter. He is dressed in a brown corduroy suit, and wears brown gaiters above his thick-soled brown boots. His shirt is khaki-coloured, and it is open at the throat, thus relieving him of the necessity of wearing a neck-tie. He looks healthy and tanned, which is exactly how he ought to look, for he has spent most of the past five months in the open-air. He has rather more confidence in himself now than he had in the first act, and he is certainly happy. He writes a few words, then picks up the letter and, leaning back in his chair, reads it through.

A clock in the room strikes three.

Then the door opens, and CAPTAIN JAMES CORNELIUS *enters from the garden.* CORNELIUS *is eight years older than* JACK *but his manner is less serious, more casual, and he might pardonably be considered the younger of the two men were it not for the look of knowledge in his eyes. Although his manner is less serious than that of* JACK, *it is in many ways more definite and authoritative. He has not commanded a company in France without obtaining the airs of a man used to being obeyed without argument. The authority in his tone, however, is more than counterbalanced by the lack of hope in his heart. Chiefly, he feels that there is very little use in striving for anything—for even if the desired object is obtained it will probably not be worth having.*

JACK. Finished?

CORNELIUS. Yes. (*Seating himself.*) I suppose your people will be here soon?

JACK. Mother said they'd arrive about three.

CORNELIUS. How many are coming?

JACK. The whole lot. My grandmother—you'll like her, Corney. She's a darling—and my father and mother—you've met my mother, haven't you?

CORNELIUS. Yes. Anybody else?

JACK. My sister and the man she's engaged to. They're going to be married soon. His name's Norwood—George Norwood—a very clever fellow. I'm glad he's going to marry Hester. He's so keen on shipbuilding that father'll probably become reconciled to my refusal to go into the Yard.

CORNELIUS. I hope your old man will be civil to us. I've got a hell of a wind up about him coming here.

JACK. Why?

CORNELIUS. Well, he doesn't like you being a farmer, and he's sure to think it's my fault. People always think I'm to blame for everything that goes wrong. The C.O. of my battalion used to blame me if the Boche broke through.

JACK. You needn't worry about father. He's a great chap; domineering, of course, but he's a great chap. I'm very fond of my father.

CORNELIUS. That's damned funny, isn't it? What I can't understand about you is your choosing to live like a farm labourer, messing about with cows and hens, when you might be the head of the biggest shipyard in the world.

JACK. My dear Corney, I've explained myself to you dozens of times.

CORNELIUS. Yes, I know you have, and I don't want you to do it again. But merely telling me why you do a thing, doesn't explain it. The only conclusion I can come to about you, Jack, is that you're off your head. (JACK *laughs good-naturedly*). No, but seriously, old chap, I'm not joking—I think you're potty. Do you think I'd spend my time looking after a lot of damned cows if I could get the job you've chucked? Good Lord, no! Cows are such silly fools, to start off with. They look at you in a sloppy, reproachful way, and suspect you of evil intentions. And then you have to get up and milk them at a ridiculous hour of the morning. I can't think why

Noah let 'em in the Ark. They'd much better have been drowned.

JACK. Don't grouse, Corney.

CORNELIUS. I'm not grousing, Jack. I'm bewildered. Here have we been working like niggers for four months, getting very little for it, and you go about like John the Baptist—as if you've heard a voice from heaven telling you to milk cows. (*He gets up and looks about the room for a moment or two.*) I say, where's the whisky?

JACK (*awkwardly*). Oh, I put it away. Do you want some?

CORNELIUS. Yes, I'd like a tot. Where is it?

JACK. I put it in the pantry.

CORNELIUS. That was silly of you I've got to go and fetch it back again.

JACK (*as* CORNELIUS *goes towards the pantry door*). Corney, I . . . I'm not preaching or anything, but do you really want it?

CORNELIUS. Yes. I shouldn't ask for it, if I didn't want it. Why?

JACK. Oh, nothing! Only you've had three drinks this morning already.

CORNELIUS. Have I?

JACK. Yes.

CORNELIUS. You're jolly good at arithmetic, Jack, I didn't think I'd had as many as that.

JACK. I don't want you to imagine that I'm trying to interfere with you! . . .

CORNELIUS. No, no, of course not

JACK. Only, it doesn't do you any good, Corney; not the amount you take.

CORNELIUS. No, I suppose it doesn't. It's habit, you know! That's all! We used to drink a lot during the War, what with hospitality and feeling fed-up and trying to keep our courage going.

JACK. Your courage?

CORNELIUS. Yes. I was twenty when I went out

to France for the first time, and chaps my age couldn't stand shell-fire so well as the older ones could. I used to be horribly afraid I'd turn funky in front of the men—a lot of youngsters felt like that—and so we used to take a tot to keep our courage up. See?

JACK. Yes.

CORNELIUS. Then a tot wasn't enough, and after a while we had to be half-drunk before we could go through with the job. I know youngsters who went wrong through trying to keep their courage up like that—drunkards, poor devils! I didn't realize that I was going the same way! Thanks very much, Jack, for telling me about it.

JACK. That's all right, old chap. I meant to say something before this, only I thought you might think I was preaching to you. It's an awkward thing to talk about, even to a friend.

CORNELIUS. Yes. Yes, it is. Jolly awkward! (*He goes back to his seat.*) How long do you think it'll be before we make any profit out of this cow business?

JACK. I don't know. We may clear our expenses by the end of the year.

CORNELIUS. Good God!

JACK. It's slow, of course, but after all our wants are simple.

CORNELIUS. They'd have to be, wouldn't they? Why, it was much more profitable fighting the old Boche.

JACK. You're always talking about profit.

CORNELIUS. Well, of course, I am. The only thing that reconciles me to associating with cows is the profit I think I'm going to make out of 'em. This chair's damned uncomfortable! . . . (*Goes to another one.*) I don't think there's much in farming, you know —not this sort anyhow—sheep-farming perhaps! . . . I say, Jack, let's go to Australia.

JACK. I'm quite happy here, Corney.

CORNELIUS. Yes, you're very easily made happy.

Do you know, I don't think another tot would do me any harm? (*Going towards the pantry.*)

JACK (*coldly*). Very well.

CORNELIUS. It's in here, isn't it?

JACK. Yes.

CORNELIUS. Only just a tot, you know! That's all! (*He goes into the pantry*).

[JACK *bends over his letter again and presently* CORNELIUS, *carrying the whisky bottle and a tumbler, returns.*]

CORNELIUS. Have some, Jack? (*As he pours a good stiff tot into the tumbler.*)

JACK. No, thanks!

CORNELIUS. I thought you wouldn't, so I didn't bring a glass for you. (*He squirts soda into the glass.*) Well, cheerio Jack!

[*The noise of a motor-car is heard outside.*

JACK. Here they are!

CORNELIUS. Oh, God! (*Gulps down the whisky.*)

[JACK *goes out.* CORNELIUS *having finished his whisky, stands in an irresolute manner for a few moments, and then goes towards the door through which* JACK *has just gone. Before he can reach it, however,* JACK *returns with* OLD MRS. THURLOW *on his arm.* CORNELIUS *goes back to the centre of the room.*]

JACK (*pausing in the doorway to call to* JANET, *not yet visible*). This way, mother. (*To* OLD MRS. THURLOW, *as they enter.*) This is Captain Cornelius, granny.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*shaking hands with* CORNELIUS). How do you do, Captain Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. Quite well, thank you. Won't you sit down?

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*seating herself*). Thank you. I've often heard about you from Jack.

CORNELIUS. Yes, he's a great chap for writing letters, old Jack.

[JANET *appears in the doorway.*

JANET. Is this it?

JACK. Yes, mother. (*Meeting her and bringing her forward.*) You know Cornelius, don't you?

JANET (*greeting* CORNELIUS). Oh, yes, I know Captain Cornelius. We met in Biggport, didn't we? Jack, dear, your father is swearing terribly over that car. Go and help him.

JACK. Very well, mother.

JANET. And be tactful, darling Agree with everything he says, even if you don't. He's not been very well lately.

JACK. All right, mother. (*Exit.*)

JANET. I always think such a lot can be done with tact. Don't you, Captain Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. Oh, yes! Yes, of course! Quite!

JANET. Neither my husband nor my son are at all tactful, and that makes things very awkward. (*To* OLD MRS. THURLOW.) What a nice farm this is, mother! So agricultural!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Do you like farming, Captain Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. Oh, yes. It's all right you know. I mean to say, if you can't get anything better! . . .

[JOHN THURLOW *enters followed by* JACK

JACK. This is Cornelius, father.

JOHN. How do you do?

CORNELIUS. Quite well, thank you. Jolly sort of weather, isn't it?

JOHN. Quite. (*Gazes about him. There is a pause for a moment.*)

CORNELIUS. Would you like a tot, sir?

JOHN. Tot?

CORNELIUS. Yes, a tot of whisky, sir.

JOHN. No, thanks! What's happened to George and Hester?

JANET. I think they've had tyre trouble on the road, John. (*To* JACK.) George's bought a lovely little two-seater.

JOHN. It's a most extraordinary thing, but whenever we go out motoring with that couple, they always have tyre trouble and get left behind.

JACK. Why didn't they come in your car, father? There was plenty of room.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Jack dear, I thought you'd retired to the country in order to study people and discover the meaning of life.

JACK. Yes, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You don't appear to have discovered much.

JOHN. Do you mean to say they have this tyre trouble on purpose?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Of course they do. I shouldn't think much of George if they didn't.

JOHN. Well, I think it's very silly. Janet and I never had any tyre trouble when we were engaged.

JANET. No, dear, and we hadn't got a motor-car either. We had to content ourselves with bicycles, and being engaged on a bicycle is very agitating. (*To* JACK.) They've fixed the date of their marriage, and it's to be almost immediately. Your father was against it, of course, but Hester said she'd go into a decline or run away or something if he didn't consent, so he gave in. Hester's a very determined girl.

JOHN. It wasn't Hester who made me consent. It was my mother, who gave me the only sensible reason for consenting that was offered to me. Hester's determination had nothing whatever to do with it It was *my* determination. Wasn't it, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*smiling*). Yes, my dear. You always get your own way.

JANET. I suspect you find this sort of life very different from the army, Captain Cornelius.

CORNELIUS. Yes, it is a bit, but not so much as you'd think. There's a lot of digging, of course, and when I'm out early, I always feel as if it were "stand-to." Only this morning, when I heard a lark singing

in the meadow just outside, I found myself thinking of something that happened to me once in the line—a queer sort of thing. It'll sound a bit sloppy, I expect to you, but it was one of those funny little things—nothing in them, you know—but they *get* you . . . see? . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes?

CORNELIUS. It's nothing much really, but once, when my company was in the line, and having a thin time, this thing happened. The old Boche was strafing hard every two hours, and he did that for three days. We knew what was up, of course—he was going to raid us, and wanted to frighten the wits out of us first. And he did raid us! It was about half-past two in the morning—rotten time to raid anybody—and just before he came over, he gave us a terrific barrage. We retaliated, and there was a frightful row going on. I was standing just in front of a dug-out in a sunken road, waiting for the barrage to lift, and I could see the Boche stuff going over into a field. It was a jolly fine sight, too—old Fritz was very good at artillery, jolly good he was—great clouds of golden sparks flying about and thick black smoke—I should have enjoyed watching it if it had been a bit further off! There was an awful row going on—our guns and their guns clattering away like the deuce—and then suddenly it stopped. That sometimes happened—during a bombardment, all the guns would be silent at the same time just for a moment or two—awful uncanny sort of silence, really. Well, that happened then! A fearful banging and exploding all round you, and then suddenly, dead silence, just for a moment. And in that moment, I heard a lark singing! You know—just going up and . . . singing! Well, I nearly cried. It was so decent! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, my dear, that's what it was—it was decent!

CORNELIUS. It kept one going, you know. You

thought to yourself "Well, everything isn't rotten!" And then the guns started again, and the row, and after a while the barrage lifted, and the Boche came over in a funk, and we were in a worse funk, and there was a filthy mess. But I forgot all about the mess somehow. I kept on thinking about that lark, singing as if there weren't any war. And when I heard the other one this morning, I thought of that time I'd listened to another lark, and without thinking what I was saying, I shouted out to him. "Hillo, old chap, at it again!" Awfully sloppy, really! . . .

[*The noise of a motor-car is heard outside.*

JANET. There they are. I expect they've got over their tyre trouble. Come and be introduced, Captain Cornelius.

CORNELIUS. Right you are, Mrs. Thurlow! (*They go out.*)

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Captain Cornelius seems a nice sort of man. I suppose you and he are very good friends, Jack?

JACK. Yes, we're very good friends. He doesn't quite see things from my point of view.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Doesn't he?

JACK. No. He's always talking about profit. I don't mean that he's a money-grubber—he isn't—but he thinks of this farm merely as a means of making money.

JOHN. Doesn't everybody do that?

JACK. I suppose most people do, but I think a man ought to put the pleasure he gets out of his work first, and the profit second.

JOHN. What I can't understand about you idealists and back-to-the-landers is that you always talk like cheap society women. Give me pleasure! Give me pleasure!! Give me pleasure!!! I see no reason why a man's job should provide him with entertainment. All work, whatever it is, is either a punishment or a mania! I build ships because I have a craving

to build ships. My work gives me pain and power and pride, but it doesn't give me pleasure. I get that out of golf.

JACK. I get pleasure out of my work.

JOHN. So you think!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Well, dear, if he thinks he gets it, that's almost as good as getting it. My experience has been that we pay for every moment of pleasure with a moment of pain.

JACK. Isn't that a very dismal doctrine, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, my dear, because even in the pain, we always have some recollection of the pleasure. Do you think Captain Cornelius will continue to work here, Jack?

JACK. He can't very well help himself. He hasn't any means apart from this farm.

JOHN. If it hadn't been for your grandmother, he wouldn't have been able to come here at all. I haven't forgiven you yet, mother, for giving Jack the money for this place.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You were very naughty and tyrannical John. I had to teach you a lesson. I've had a lot of trouble with you lately, both about Jack and about Hester.

JOHN. But you got your way, as usual. I don't mind admitting that, now there's nobody here but Jack.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. It's very nice to get your way. Very nice!

JACK. I suppose the "Magnificent" is nearly ready for her trial trip, father.

JOHN. She won't be long now.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Your father's not been at all well lately Jack. Dr. Jordan says he's been working too hard.

JOHN. Oh, Jordan's an old woman.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*laughing*) So am I, dear.

JOHN. Yes, but not that sort of old woman. The

kind of old woman I mean is generally a man. I suppose you never think of coming back to the Yard, Jack?

JACK. No, father. I'm very happy here.

[JANET *followed by* HESTER, GEORGE NORWOOD *and* CORNELIUS *in that order, returns.*]

JANET. Captain Cornelius has been showing us the cows and chickens, and Hester's made George promise to buy her a cow when they're married.

GEORGE. I can't think what you want a cow for when you've got a motor-car

JANET. Oh, I always think a cow's such a nice thing to have about the house.

HESTER. Besides we'll be able to have our own butter and cream and milk.

GEORGE. Yes, but who's going to milk the cow? Me, I suppose.

CORNELIUS. It's not so easy to lose your temper with a dairy as it is with a cow. I say, would anyone like a tot?

[*He flourishes the whisky-bottle. General murmurs of "No, thanks." Everyone, except* CORNELIUS, *is now seated.*]

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You don't seem very fond of farming, Captain Cornelius?

JOHN. You'd rather be doing bigger work, eh?

CORNELIUS. I don't know! It's difficult to find bigger work. If you tell people you fought in the War they use it as evidence against you. They think you must be an idiot because you didn't get a soft job in a Government office. Farming's better than nothing, of course.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I'd like to see over the farm. Won't you show it to me, Jack?

JACK. Certainly, granny! (*Offering his arm to her.*) You will all come, won't you?

HESTER. Rather! Come along, George. (HESTER *and* GEORGE *go out.*)

JACK. Corney, will you bring mother?

CORNELIUS. I'd love to.

[OLD MRS. THURLOW *and* JACK *go out.*

JOHN. Janet, you go along with Jack. I've changed my mind, Cornelius—I will have a tot of that whisky! You and I'll have one together, eh? We'll catch you up, Janet.

CORNELIUS. Oh, but Mrs. Thurlow! . . .

JANET. Don't bother about me, Captain Cornelius. I'll be quite all right with the others. (*Exit*).

[CORNELIUS *fetches the whisky-bottle to the table where* JOHN THURLOW *is now sitting with his back to the door and windows.*]

CORNELIUS (*pouring out the whisky*). Say when, sir!

JOHN (*when enough has been poured out*). Thanks!

CORNELIUS. Soda?

JOHN. Thank you! (CORNELIUS *pours a little of the soda into the glass.*) Good heavens, man, it's nearly neat!

CORNELIUS (*holding up the glass and examining it.*) Neat! There's no such thing as neat whisky nowadays! If you have any more soda, it'll taste like buttermilk.

JOHN. Well, I like buttermilk. Fill it up!

[CORNELIUS *does so, and then pours out a stiff whisky, with very little soda in it, for himself.*]

JOHN. You take a pretty stiff glass, Cornelius. There's half a tumbler of raw whisky there!

CORNELIUS (*raising his glass*). Here's luck, sir!

JOHN (*raising his*). Thank you. The same to you!

[*They drink.* CORNELIUS *almost empties his glass.*]

JOHN (*putting his glass down and taking out his pipe*). So you're not very keen on farming, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. No, I'm not *keen!* . . .

JOHN. What made you take it up?

CORNELIUS. Well, mostly it was Jack. I was in France when he was there, doing a job, and he talked a lot of stuff about leading a natural life that didn't

interest me very much. I'd had rather more than my share of the open-air, and I was looking forward to a long, comfortable, fuggy life. But when he began to talk about farming—well, I'd done some digging you know, and I thought I might as well do that as anything else.

JOHN. Do you see any prospect of success in this business?

CORNELIUS. It depends on what you mean by success. There isn't a great fortune in it, but I daresay there's a decent living, once you've got going. Of course, it's slow.

JOHN. Is Jack content with it?

CORNELIUS. Oh, quite! I sometimes think he'd be annoyed if it were a financial success.

JOHN. That's nonsense. He couldn't carry on if it didn't pay.

CORNELIUS. No, I know that. But he'll be content so long as he can keep himself out of it. Jack's very clever, of course, but he hasn't any common sense. I've seen fellows like him in the War. They nearly always got a posthumous V. C. If they didn't get the Victoria Cross, they were dead certain to get the wooden one. I've no ambition of that sort. All I want is a reasonably decent time. I don't want to influence anybody or to improve anyone's mind the way Jack does, and I don't want a terrific amount of responsibility. I just want a good time. That's all. It isn't much!

JOHN. What do you mean by a good time?

CORNELIUS. Well, enough money not to have to bother about things, and not too much work. (*Finishes his whisky.*) Have another, sir?

JOHN. No, thanks! I haven't finished this. But don't let me prevent you from having one. (CORNELIUS *helps himself to a second glass of whisky.*) You'll have trouble in getting a job where there's plenty of money and little work.

CORNELIUS. Yes. I've noticed that.

JOHN. H'm! And you don't see any likelihood of getting a reasonably decent time on this farm, eh?

CORNELIUS. As far as I can see, I'm in for a lot of work and very little money. I asked Jack, just before you came, when he thought we'd begin to make a profit, and he said we might clear our expenses by the end of the year. That's damned encouraging, isn't it?

JOHN. Aren't you a bit indiscreet in telling people you want a soft job?

CORNELIUS. I suppose I am, but I'm not going to make any pretence about it. Anyhow, *you* can't give me a soft job, so there's no good my trying to humbug you. I couldn't build a ship to save my life. Was Jack any good at it?

JOHN. He was pretty good, as far as he'd gone.

CORNELIUS. Mind you, Mr. Thurlow, I don't advocate soft jobs for everybody. No! Only for people who went to the War. That's all! You see, we chaps had our experience of life crowded into less time than most people. See? (*He is now slightly drunk.*) It took you about twenty-five years to learn what we had to learn in four years. See? Well, there ought to be some compensation for that, oughtn't there? And I think the compensation should be a good time. That's what I'm out for, as comfortable and easy a time as possible. A cushy life—that's what I want.

JOHN (*rather outraged by this*). That's not a very noble attitude, Captain Cornelius.

CORNELIUS. I know it's not. I've given up being noble. When I went out to France first, my head was stuffed with noble sentiments. Didn't take me long to get rid of 'em when I got there. Do you know, I read "Henry the Fifth" before I went out—you know, Shakespeare—and I swallowed all that rot about "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers." (*Drinks.*)

I expected to find everybody full of Christian charity —except the old Boche, of course! I hadn't been there five minutes before I found there was as much intrigue at the Front as there was in England. Everybody trying to get everybody else's job, except the fools like Jack, who got all the dirty and dangerous work to do. Do you know what the private soldier's opinion of human nature is, sir?

JOHN. No. What is it?

CORNELIUS. "I'm all right. To hell with you!" That's about it, don't you think? Barring the fools, of course.

JOHN. Is that your view?

CORNELIUS. It is now, but it wasn't always my view.

JOHN. H'm! (*He sits back in his chair and contemplates* CORNELIUS *who finishes his whisky.*)

CORNELIUS. Shall we go and join the others?

JOHN. In a minute or two. (*Leaning forward with his arms resting on the table. Both men are sitting with their backs to the door and windows.*) Has Jack ever spoken to you about the shipyard?

CORNELIUS. Oh, yes, he's talked a lot about it He's got some damned funny opinions about machinery, old Jack!

JOHN. Listen to me, Cornelius! I want him back in the Yard. I've no belief in this tomfoolery of a farm, but even if I had, I want him back. My reasons are more easily felt than explained, and anyhow they don't particularly matter to you. I want him back. That's the main point. You're tired of this business. That's so, isn't it?

CORNELIUS. Yes, that's quite right.

JOHN. Well, now, I'm prepared to make a bargain with you. If this farm is a failure, Jack'll come back to the Yard. I know him! He can't stand up to a failure. He must have success.

CORNELIUS. But it won't fail.

JOHN. It can be made to fail.

[JACK THURLOW *comes to the doorway as* JOHN *says this. He stops and listens, unperceived.*]

CORNELIUS. What do you mean?

JOHN. It can be made to fail. If you'll make it fail, I'll give you a thousand pounds.

CORNELIUS. What?

JOHN. I'll give you a thousand pounds if you make this farm fail within the next twelve months.

CORNELIUS. My dear Mr. Thurlow, I'm pretty far gone, I know, but not quite so far gone as that. Letting a pal down—oh, my dear sir! . . .

JOHN. You won't be letting him down. You'll be doing him a good turn—curing him of a romantic delusion—and bringing him back to his proper place.

CORNELIUS. I daresay you could find a good excuse, Mr. Thurlow, for your share in the business, but I shouldn't be able to find one for mine. Oh, no!

JOHN. A thousand pounds—that's a pretty good excuse, isn't it, for a man who wants an easy time and plenty of money?

CORNELIUS. A thousand pounds is very nice, but damn it . . . oh, no, no!

JOHN. Well, I'll give you five hundred if you'll clear out at once and leave Jack on his own.

CORNELIUS. Five hundred!

JOHN. Yes. That involves you in nothing that you aren't already willing to do. A thousand if you'll stay and ruin the farm: five hundred if you'll clear out at once and leave Jack to ruin it himself.

JACK (*from the door*). Well, Corney, what are you going to do?

[JOHN THURLOW *and* CORNELIUS *start up, the latter unsteadily.*]

CORNELIUS. I didn't know you were there, old chap.

JACK. I came back to fetch you both, and overheard father's generous offer. What are you going to do, Corney? Father's waiting for your answer

CORNELIUS. I think I'll take the five hundred, Mr. Thurlow! That's not playing low, Jack! As a matter of fact, old chap, if I was to stay on here, I'd really be entitled to the thousand. I'm sure I'd ruin you.

JACK. You said you'd stand by me! . . .

CORNELIUS. Yes, I know I did, and I'd like to, but really, Jack, I hate the whole damned business. I ought to have married a girl who could keep me in the style I'm accustomed to. You'd much better go back to your father's business! . . .

JACK. No! No! Whatever else I do, I won't do that. It isn't very honourable, father, to tempt my friend to betray me! . . .

CORNELIUS. Oh, I say, Jack! . . .

JACK. Didn't he offer you a thousand pounds to make the farm fail so that I might go cringing back to him?

CORNELIUS. He didn't mean that.

JOHN. Oh, yes, I did. If I want a thing, I want it. That's all! I want my son back in my Yard, and if I have to starve him into returning, then I'll starve him!

CORNELIUS. Well, of course, that's a point of view, but it seems a damned silly one to me.

JOHN. Perhaps, but it's my point of view, and that's good enough for me. When I look at you two young men, I wonder to myself what's to become of this world. (*To* CORNELIUS.) You care for nothing but what you call a good time. Easy eating, easy drinking, easy everything, and no responsibility.

CORNELIUS (*as if considering this statement.*) Yes, I think that's a very fair statement of what I want.

JOHN. Your flippancy, Captain Cornelius, may amuse fools, but it won't carry you very far.

CORNELIUS. Mr. Thurlow, will you believe that I'm perfectly serious when I say I don't care where it carries me? Do you think I haven't thought about

life, just as much as you and Jack here? (*With a sudden and startling burst of passion.*) My God, man, don't you realize what men like me have been through? . . . (*He recovers himself.*) I say, I'm awfully sorry! I must be drunk. I didn't mean to break out on you like that, Mr. Thurlow, but all the same, it's quite true—I don't care a damn about anything.

JOHN. That'll do the world a lot of good!

CORNELIUS. I don't care. I take no interest in the world. If it's going to blazes, well let it go. I don't care! The only thing I want at this minute is the five hundred quid you're going to give me, and as soon as I get it, I'll go off and have a thumping good time while it lasts. See? Sorry, Jack! Sorry, old chap, but this noble life of yours—nothing in it. . . . Do you know I believe I am drunk! I'm talking like a politician, so I must be drunk! Do you mind, Mr. Thurlow, letting me have that cheque, and then I'll just go and have a sleep.

JOHN. I'll send it to you.

CORNELIUS. You write it out, and give it to Jack He's straight. He's a fool, too, but he's straight. He wouldn't be straight if he weren't a fool. I think I'll go and have a sleep now (*He goes towards the door, but pauses half-way and turns towards them.*) Do you know, I lie awake at night hoping there's a heaven, so that chaps like Jack may get some reward? You think that out! (*He staggers towards the door, turning to* JOHN THURLOW.) Did you say five hundred pounds or guineas?

JOHN. Pounds!

CORNELIUS. Guineas would be better, but still . . . pounds! (*He goes off.*)

JACK. Your machine-civilisation, father, made him like that.

JOHN. Don't be childish!

JACK. And then you come here and make him

drunk and tempt him to betray me! . . . Oh, father, I'm disappointed in you! . . .

[*He sits down in dejection at the table, while his father goes towards the door leading to the garden.*]

JOHN. I've done nothing I'm ashamed of. (*At the door.*) Here's your grandmother! (*Coming hurriedly to the table.*) Jack, don't tell her about the thousand pounds.

JACK. I thought you weren't ashamed, father!

JOHN. I'm not, but I don't want her to know that!

[OLD MRS. THURLOW *enters.*

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John, dear, we're all waiting for you. Why, what's the matter?

JOHN. Oh, the usual argument, mother.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Where's Captain Cornelius?

JOHN. He's tired, and he's gone to lie down for a while.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I'm afraid you're not telling the truth, John. I suspected there might be trouble here, so I came myself instead of letting the others come. What's the matter, Jack?

JACK. Ask father, granny.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John!

JOHN. It's nothing, mother. Let's go home. I ought not to have come here. I'm not well, and Jack and I are hopelessly out of sympathy with each other. I shan't trouble you again, Jack! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. One minute, John! (*Sitting down.*) I want to know what's happened.

JOHN. Nothing of any consequence, mother. Let's go home.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Jack! (Jack *turns away, without answering.*) Jack, my dear, I'm speaking to you. Don't you hear me?

JACK. I can't tell you, granny. Father must do that.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John, have you been doing something of which Jack's ashamed?

JOHN. I've done nothing that any father'd be ashamed of!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. That's not my question, John. Have you done anything of which your son is ashamed?

JOHN. Jack's sentimentality may make him think so! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Then you did do something?

JOHN (*grudgingly*). Yes.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. What was it?

JOHN. I . . . well, I offered Cornelius five hundred pounds if he'd clear out of this and leave Jack on his own. I thought then he wouldn't be able to carry on the farm and he'd have to come back to the Yard. Jack heard me making the offer, and there was a row. Cornelius is drunk. He's in there sleeping it off.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Was that all you did?

JOHN (*with a slight hesitation*). Yes, mother.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Is that all, Jack?

JOHN. Don't you believe me, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, dear! Is that all your father did, Jack?

JACK (*catching a look of appeal from his father*). Yes, granny.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. All those fierce looks for that! Oh, my dear! (*She gets up and goes to him.*)

JACK (*almost breaking down*). Granny, I'm frightfully unhappy! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*embracing him as if he were a child*). Poor Jack! You do so want to be a great man and to assert yourself, don't you? Well, well, you must be allowed to have your way until you get tired of it. Come, come, make up your quarrel with your father. And you, John, try not to be so impatient and domineering. You've behaved very stupidly. I can't turn my back for a moment but you're blundering. You'll have to let Jack work this out for himself

It's no good trying to force him. Come, Jack! (*She tries to lead him to his father.*)

JACK (*resisting her*). No granny, I can't . not yet!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. My dear, you're being very obstinate. You're almost as bad as your father. I don't approve of what he did, but it hardly deserves so much condemnation as this. I suppose you didn't do anything else, John?

JOHN. No, mother. I've told you I didn't. Cornelius told me he was tired of the farm, but couldn't give it up because he hadn't any money, and so I offered him five hundred to clear out! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Five hundred pounds seems a lot of money to give a man for doing what he wants to do.

JOHN. You know that I'd pay anything to get Jack back again.

[*The door opens and* CORNELIUS *enters.*

CORNELIUS (*to* JOHN). I say, couldn't you split the difference between a thousand and five hundred? . . . (*Seeing* OLD MRS. THURLOW.) Oh, I beg your pardon! I didn't see you, Mrs. Thurlow! I'll come back later. (*He turns to go.*)

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Captain Cornelius!

CORNELIUS (*turning to her again*). Yes, Mrs. Thurlow!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Come here!

CORNELIUS. It's awfully kind of you, Mrs. Thurlow, but—well, to tell you the truth I'm not really in a fit condition to 'sociate with ladies, so if you'll excuse me! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I think I can bear your society, Captain Cornelius, whatever your condition may be.

CORNELIUS. Well, that's awfully nice of you, but really . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Sit down, please.

CORNELIUS. But the others aren't sitting down.

(*To* JOHN *and* JACK, *appealingly*). I say, is there a strafe on?

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*indicating a chair*). Sit here, Captain Cornelius, beside me. (*She sits down.*)

CORNELIUS. Thanks awfully! (*He sits down.*) I say, won't you other chaps sit down? The solemn way you're all standing about makes me feel as if I were being court-martialled.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Don't trouble about them, Captain Cornelius. Just listen to me!

CORNELIUS. Very good, Mrs. Thurlow.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. My son made an offer of money to you.

CORNELIUS. Yes. Yes, that's quite right—he did! He offered me . . .

JACK (*interrupting him*). Five hundred pounds to clear out of this and leave me on my own. And you wanted a thousand!

CORNELIUS. A thousand, yes. Yes, I wanted a thousand! But wait a minute—that isn't quite . . I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Thurlow, but I'm not really myself, you know. What are we talking about? . . .

JACK. Father offered you five hundred pounds to chuck the farm, and you wanted a thousand. That's all!

CORNELIUS (*bewildered*). That's not right, is it?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Then what is right?

JACK. I overheard the offer, granny. There isn't anything else.

CORNELIUS (*rising and staggering towards* JACK). But . . .

JACK (*very emphatically*). You wanted a thousand to clear out, and father wouldn't pay more than five hundred. That's all.

CORNELIUS. Yes, that's right, Jack. That's quite right! I thought perhaps he'd split the difference. (*Turning to* OLD MRS. THURLOW.) That's quite

right, Mrs. Thurlow! I'm sorry I interrupted little family discussion! Very sorry! . . . (*He staggers out again*).

JOHN. Come, mother! We'd better go.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I don't like to see you parting like this! The whole thing seems so queer! Aren't you going to give us any tea, Jack?

JACK. Yes, granny, I want to, but . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Aren't you being very hard on your father, dear?

JACK. I'm sorry, granny!

JOHN. I think we'd better not stay, mother. We can get tea on the way back.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. But the others—won't they think it odd?

JOHN. We can make some excuse.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Very well. I'm sorry our excursion has ended like this. I don't quite understand! I thought you'd done something serious, John, but . . . I hoped you'd feel a little more charitable, Jack. I'm very disappointed . .

[JANET *and* HESTER *and* GEORGE *enter.*

JANET. Aren't you coming to see the farm?

JOHN. No, we're going home.

JANET. Going home! Already!

HESTER. We've only just come, father.

JOHN We're going home, my dear. Jack and I have had a disagreement, and we're going home. George, and you Hester go on ahead, will you?

GEORGE. Very good sir. (*Going to* JACK.) Good-bye, Jack, old chap!

JACK (*shaking hands with him*). Good-bye, George.

GEORGE. Come on, Hester! (*He goes out.*)

HESTER. But I don't want to go yet!

JOHN. Do as you're told.

HESTER (*after a moment's hesitation*). Good-bye, Jack. (*She kisses him.*)

JACK. Good-bye, Hester!

HESTER. I'll came and see you again soon. I think it's a very nice farm. (*Exit.*)

JANET. What's happened?

JOHN. Nothing. Come along mother!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I'll come in a moment.

[JOHN THURLOW *turns to* JANET, *indicating that she should go before him.*]

JANET. But Jack—I want Jack! . . .

[THURLOW *puts her arm in his and leads her out.* OLD MRS. THURLOW *goes to* JACK, *and puts her hand on his shoulder.*]

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Was that really all, Jack?

JACK. Yes, granny!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Such a pity—such a pity! (*She kisses him.*)

JACK (*holding her to him*). Granny, I'm not really uncharitable! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Aren't you, dear?

JACK. No. Only! . . . Oh, well! (*He turns away from her.*)

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Good-bye, my dear!

JACK. Good-bye, granny!

[*She goes towards the door. She stops for a moment, as if thinking, but does not turn back. Then she goes out. Jack stands still until he hears the sound of the motors moving off. Then he goes to the door and looks after them.*]

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE I

The scene is the same as that of the first act, but the time is three months later than the second act, in the early summer, and the afternoon sunshine pouring through the open windows makes the room look very attractive, particularly as the eye rests here and there on bowls of flowers plucked that morning. OLD MRS. THURLOW *is sitting alone, just out of the sunlight, but well within sight of the garden. She is reading at random in a book of verse by Edmund Waller, and as the scene begins she finds this poem, entitled "On the Picture of a Fair Youth, taken after he was dead," which she reads aloud.*

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*reading*).

As gathered flowers, while their wounds are new,
Look gay and fresh, as on the stalk they grew:
Torn from the root that nourished them, awhile
(Not taking notice of their fate) they smile.
And, in the hand which rudely plucked them, show
Fairer than those that to their autumn grow;
So love and beauty still that visage grace;
Death cannot fright them from their wonted place.
Alive, the hand of crooked Age had marred
Those lovely features, which cold death has spared . . .

[*She puts down the book, and turns to a bowl of flowers which she draws towards her. She touches them very gently, and murmurs a line or two from Waller's poem. Quoting.*]

And, in the hand which rudely plucked them, show
Fairer than those that to their autumn grow.

[*The door opens and* JACK THURLOW *enters. He wears the clothes in which we saw him in the second act.* OLD MRS. THURLOW *rises eagerly to greet him.*]

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Jack, dear, I'm so glad you've come.

JACK (*kissing her*). Is he very ill?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. He's ill, of course, but he's more troubled than ill. Dr. Jordan has forbidden him to go on the "Magnificent's" maiden trip! . . .

JACK. Good heavens! He must be pretty bad!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. It's a terrible blow for him. He's so proud of the "Magnificent," and this coming on top of your desertion! . . .

JACK. Desertion, granny!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. That's how he feels about it, Jack. He doesn't say much, but I know that he broods over it. You've never been to the Yard once since the boat was launched. That hurts his pride, my dear! You take no interest in his greatest achievement, and you're his only son. You've not been here since that Sunday we went to see your farm.

JACK. I know!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. It seems a little stubborn of you, Jack! I didn't realize that you were so hard. I thought that when Hester and George got married your father'd feel less grieved about you, but I'm afraid he doesn't.

JACK. Granny, you believe me, don't you, when I say that I love my father? . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, dear, I do.

JACK. I'd gladly do anything in my power for him, but I can't do this. It's against everything that I believe and feel, and when I think sometimes of going back to the Yard, because I know he wants me to, something inside me tells me I shall betray myself if

I go. Father can't see my point of view—won't see it. Well, that can't be helped! I'm sorry, but it can't helped.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Has Captain Cornelius left you?

JACK. Yes, he's gone to Australia. I thought I should miss him more than I do, but I've managed to get on fairly well without him. I think my farm's going to be a success.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I hope so, dear.

JACK (*picking up her book*). What are you reading, granny?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Some of Edmund Waller's poetry Jack. A very charming poet—a little artificial, perhaps, but very charming.

JACK. I don't read poetry.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No dear! I've often noticed that farmers seldom do. I'm rather anxious about you, Jack.

JACK. About me?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes. I'm wondering whether you'll always be a prig!

JACK. A prig! Me!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I like to think of young men being very self-opinionated and revolutionary. They ought to be saying wild things when they're twenty-one, but I don't think they ought to be saying them when they're thirty, and I'm sure they oughtn't to be saying them when they're forty. What I'm sometimes afraid of is that you'll still be saying when you're middle-aged the things which were quite right for you to be saying when you were a boy—and you know, Jack, things which sound very clever at twenty-one sound very silly at forty.

JACK. I'm not trying to be clever, granny.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Well, then, there's hope for you, dear! I don't think anyone has a right to be a clever young man after the age of thirty.

JACK. Why does father want to see me?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. It's about the "Magnificent"!

JACK (*impatiently*). Oh what's the use granny! I may be a prig and a fool and all the things you say I am! . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, no, dear, I didn't say you *were* a prig or a fool I only said I hoped you wouldn't be either the one or the other.

JACK. Well, if I am, I am. I can't help it. And it's perfectly useless for father to try to persuade me to go back to the Yard. I won't go.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. That isn't why your father sent for you, Jack.

JACK. Oh! Then why did he send for me?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. He seems reconciled to the fact that you won't return to the Yard—at least he talks now as if he were! . . . (*The door opens and* JANET *enters.*) Oh, here's your mother!

JANET (*going to* JACK *and embracing him*). Jack, dear, your father's coming down. Promise me you'll do what he wants!

JACK. I must know what it is first.

JANET. Oh, why do you always expect your father to explain things to you!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. He wants you to take his place on the "Magnificent" . . .

JANET (*interrupting*). Yes, dear, on her maiden trip. He's been forbidden to go himself. Dr. Jordan's very arbitrary, but of course he's a specialist, and if he weren't arbitrary nobody would believe he was a specialist! . . .

[*The door opens and* JOHN THURLOW, *wearing a dressing-gown and bedroom slippers, enters. He has a graver and more haggard look than when we last saw him.*]

JOHN. That you, Jack?

JACK. Yes, father!

JOHN (*sitting down*). Feeling all right?

JACK. Yes, thank you. I'm sorry you're not well, father!

JOHN (*with nervous irritability*). Yes, yes, yes! . . . (*Recovering himself.*) Has your grandmother told you what I want you to do?

JACK. Partly, father, but I don't quite understand. You want me to go on the "Magnificent"! . . .

JOHN. Yes—in my place. My illness has been a bitter disappointment to me, Jack—one of the worst blows I've ever had. I'd set my heart on going on the "Magnificent's" maiden trip, but Jordan's absolutely forbidden it. Overwork, he says! Nervous breakdown! . . . Everybody who's had anything to do with her will be there—except me, the man who made her! . . . You don't realize how I've imagined her sailing up New York Harbour, with all the other ships sounding their syrens to welcome her. I've seen myself—oh, a thousand times I've seen myself on the bridge beside the captain, taking my ship to her berth! . . . And Jordan says I can't go, I mustn't go! . . . (*His weakened nerves almost cause him to break down, but after a moment of emotion, he recovers himself.*) Oh, well, it can't be helped, can it? I'm disappointed, but . . . (*He makes a gesture of resignation.*) It can't be helped! But if I don't go there won't be a Thurlow on board! You see, Jack? There won't be a Thurlow on board! That doesn't seem right, does it? I ought to be there, but if I'm not allowed to go, someone of my name ought to go, don't you think? So I sent for you, Jack. I want you to take my place. That's all! I won't ask you to come back to the Yard—though God knows I'd give anything to have you there. All I ask of you is that you'll gratify me to this extent. You and I are the only Thurlows left! . . .

JANET. Oh, John, there's granny and Hester . . . and me! . . .

JOHN. I'm talking about men—not women! (*To*

JACK.) If you don't go, Jack, I'll either have to go myself! . . .

JANET. You can't, dear!

JOHN (*ignoring the interruption*). Or else the "Magnificent" will take her maiden trip without a Thurlow on board.

JACK. Would that matter, father?

JOHN. Matter! . . . My best boat to go out for the first time, and none of us on board! You must see that wouldn't be right.

JACK. Can't George go? He's one of us now.

JOHN. No, he's not. Hester's one of his family! That's what's happened to *her!* You'll go, won't you, Jack?

JACK. How long shall I be away?

JOHN. Not more than a fortnight—three weeks at the outside.

JACK. Three weeks! Oh, I can't, father!

JOHN. Why—why can't you?

JACK. I can't leave my farm at this time of the year for three weeks! . . .

JOHN (*losing control of himself*). Damn your farm! What does it matter?

JACK. It matters a great deal to me, father!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John, dear, Jack's farm is just as important to him as your shipyard is to you. I think you ought to make allowance for that.

JOHN. Is he making any allowance for me?

JACK. I can't see why it's so important for a Thurlow to be on board. She won't sail any the better for that.

JOHN. That's the trouble with you! You've never been able to see anything but what you wanted to see.

JACK. I'm certainly not going to run the risk of ruining my farm for a piece of sentimentality. That's all it is, father. Sentimentality!

JOHN. Does that make it any the less real? Do you think that sentimentality, as you call it, doesn't

love a man's heart just as strongly as anything else? My God, I wish I weren't sick! I wouldn't go hat in hand to you, my boy . . . not for anything . . . not for anything! And then I'm refused because you've got to make hay or feed your damned chickens. Ha! That's more important than my ship!

JANET. Why don't you do something that your father asks you, Jack! You seem always to be opposing him.

JOHN. Yes, my own son—I daren't ask him to do anything for me because he's certain to refuse! Strangers! Oh, yes, they'll do things for me—glad to do them. George Norwood would give his soul for me. But my own son . . . my *only* son . . . oh, no, I mustn't expect him to do anything at all—except refuse me everything I ask.

JACK. You always assume that what I'm doing doesn't matter. Your whims are more important than my work. I won't go, father!

JOHN. (*with bitter sarcasm*). Ha! My only son.

JACK. You've done your best to spoil my farm. It isn't any thanks to you that I've kept my end up. I haven't forgotten all that happened when you came to see me! That cancelled a good deal of my obligation to you.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Because your father offered Captain Cornelius money to do what he'd already made up his mind to do? Because of that, Jack?

JACK (*after a moment's hesitation*). Yes, granny!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. My dear, you're . . . vindictive!

JOHN. That isn't all, mother! I asked him not to tell you, but I don't know that it matters very much. I'm not ashamed of it! . . .

JACK. There's no need, father! . . .

JOHN (*to his mother*). I offered Cornelius a thousand pounds if he'd make the farm fail—so that I could get Jack back to the Yard.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You tried to bribe Captain Cornelius to ruin Jack's farm?

JOHN. Yes.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. But you said . . Jack, you said . . .

JOHN. I asked him not to tell you.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, John, that was mean of you . . . mean!

JOHN. I'm not ashamed of what I did.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Then why did you ask him not to tell me?

JOHN. Because I knew you wouldn't like it, and I didn't want to hurt you. I've often not done a thing —or kept it from you—not because I thought it was wrong—I didn't—but because I knew you'd think it was wrong, and I didn't want to hurt you. Everybody does things like that! That's morality . . . hiding things that you don't think are wrong from people who *do* think they're wrong!

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*going to* JACK). Oh, and I've misjudged you so, my dear!

JACK. Its all right, granny. I knew you didn't understand.

[*He leads her back to her seat.*

JOHN. You won't take my place on the "Magnificent, Jack?

JACK. No, father. I'd be willing to do so if it were important, but it isn't!

JOHN. Isn't it horrible to have a son who belittles everything that matters to you!

JANET. You'd better let George and Hester go, John!

JOHN. No, no! It must be either Jack or me. And since he won't go, well, I will!

JANET. But Dr. Jordan says you mustn't go.

JOHN. I don't care what Jordan says. Jack thinks this wish of mine is just silly sentiment. Well, men have died for silly sentiment, haven't they?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Don't be stupid, John !

JOHN. Mother, you know me ! I swear that I'll go on the "Magnificent," even if I'm carried on to her, unless Jack takes my place. Now, Master Jack, what's your answer to that ?

JANET. You'll die, if you go.

JOHN. Well, I can die then—on my ship !

[*There is a slight pause.*

JACK. All right, father ! I'll go !

JOHN. You'll go ! . . .

JACK. Yes.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*going to him*). My dear, that's very fine of you ! (*To her son.*) You don't deserve it, John.

JOHN. Thank you, Jack. (*To his mother.*) I may not deserve it, mother, but I'm very grateful ! . . .

JANET. But what about the farm ?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Can't we get someone to look after it for you, Jack, while you're away ?

JOHN. Yes, we can do that. I'll pay—whatever it is.

JACK. I don't want you to pay, father. I'll manage my own farm.

JOHN. Very well, my boy. I can't tell you how glad I am ! . . .

JACK. There's no need to tell me. I'm not going because I want to, but because you've forced me. When am I to be ready ?

JOHN. She sails on Tuesday.

JACK. That gives me two days.

[*He goes towards the door.*

JANET. Aren't you going to stay to dinner, Jack ?

JACK. No, thanks, mother ! I want to go home ! (*Exit.*)

JANET (*hurrying after him*). I can't let him go like that !

[*Old* MRS. THURLOW *is back in the seat where we saw her at the beginning of the scene. She*

has picked up the volume of Waller's verses and is reading it aloud. Her son sits at the table, vaguely listening.]

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*reading.*)

As gathered flowers, while their wounds are new,
Look gay and fresh, as on the stalk they grew;
Torn from the root that nourished them, awhile
(Not taking notice of their fate) they smile,
And, in the hand which rudely plucked them, show
Fairer than those that to their autumn grow;
So love and beauty still that visage grace;
Death cannot fright them from their wonted place.
Alive, the hand of crooked Age had marred
Those lovely features, which cold death has spared. . . .

JOHN (*interrupting her*). What's that, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*quoting*) . . . the hand of crooked Age had marred those lovely features! . . . Just a poem, my dear! I wonder if we old people are ever quite fair to the young.

JOHN. Are they ever fair to us?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Are any of us fair to each other?

JOHN. I suppose you feel bitter against me, too, mother, because I tried to bribe Cornelius?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Bitter, dear?

JOHN. Yes. You said you were disappointed in me.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*going to him*). My dear, I don't love you only when you please me. I still love you even when you disappoint me. That's what love's for, isn't it?

[*She turns his face up to hers and kisses him.*]

SCENE II

The scene is a corner of the garden of THURLOW'S *country house five days later. The corner is sunny, and* JOHN THURLOW *often goes there for warmth and air.*

There is a seat, shaded by a tree, in the corner, and here, when the curtain rises, JOHN THURLOW *is sitting.* OLD MRS. THURLOW *comes to him from the house which cannot be seen.*

JOHN (*anxiously*). Well, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Nothing yet, dear. (*She sits down beside him.*)

JOHN. Damn George! What's he thinking about? He knows I'm all pins and needles for the latest messages.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. My dear, you mustn't get so excited. George probably has some very good reason for not telephoning this morning. You had all the messages up to yesterday evening! . . .

JOHN. Yes, yes, I know, mother. I'm sorry, but I'm so jumpy.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You're very pleased, aren't you, with her record so far?

JOHN (*with pleasure*). Yes, I am. She's been wonderful. Wonderful! Three days out now! She must be nearly there. I can imagine her presently sighting Nantucket, and all the passengers looking eagerly for the flat American coast. I wish I were there!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Well, dear, you've almost been there, what with wireless messages and your own imagination. Why, you've almost seen her going across!

JOHN. Yes, that's true. She's exceeded my hopes, mother. It won't be easy to break her record. I can't think why George doesn't send the latest messages. It's so funny to be late with them now.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. He's a little anxious about Hester.

JOHN. Anxious about Hester! What's there to be anxious about?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, John, dear, don't you guess?

JOHN. No. (*Then as he understands.*) Do you mean to say. . . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, dear. Hester's going to have a baby.

JOHN. How strange that seems! My little Hester! . . We must have her here, mother. The baby ought to be born in my house—my grandchild ought to be born here. (*Turning to her with a laugh.*) Do you realize that you'll be a great-grandmother? *Great*-grandmother! You know, you're beginning to get old. You'll have to get a little more sedate in your ways, mother. (OLD MRS. THURLOW *gives a little laugh of satisfaction.*) And I shall be a grandfather! That makes me feel a bit . . . ancient! I hope to God it's a boy. We'll have him in the Yard—a shipbuilder, ha, ha, like his father! And his grandfather! Eh? Where is Hester? Is she here?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Don't go to her yet. She's with Janet. She came out this morning to tell us.

JOHN. Janet'll be pleased—as pleased as I am. It's extraordinary, mother; I feel as proud as if I were going to be a father instead of just a grandfather How do you account for that?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I don't quite know, dear. I felt like that about Jack and Hester, but that was understandable. A granny has all the pleasures of motherhood without any of the pains. I expect I shall feel just the same about Hester's little child as I felt about her—as I felt about you, dear. You are my ships, all of you, going out on long, difficult journeys to strange places, little ships and big ships that I made, that I love.

JOHN. You're a wonderful old woman, mother!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, no, I'm not. I'm just your mother. That's all.

JOHN. Yes, but you're different from other men's mothers. You're different altogether. I'm sixty-two but somehow you make me feel as if I were still a boy.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Do I, dear? And aren't you still a boy—with your enthusiasms and your impatience and your wanting the impossible.

JOHN. I've never wanted the impossible. I'm a perfectly reasonable man—always have been.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, no, you haven't. I remember when you were a very little boy, John, I lifted you up in my arms one evening, so that you could see the sun set. And as it went down, I said to you, "Now, dear, watch! Going! Going!! Gone!!!" And then the sun set, and you turned to me, with extraordinary confidence, and you said, "Do it again, mammy!"

JOHN. And did you do it again?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I had to pretend I could only do it once a day. You've always been rather like that, John!

JOHN (*very pleased*). Ha, ha, that's a good story, that! Do it again, mammy! That's good, that!

[OLD MRS. THURLOW *suddenly rises.*

JOHN. What is it, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. I thought I heard someone! . . . I'll go and see! . . .

[*She goes off, leaving him alone. He rises and stretches, and then seats himself more comfortably.*]

JOHN (*to himself*). Fancy my little Hester having a baby! She's only a child herself! . . .

[OLD MRS. THURLOW *returns. There is a look of terrible grief on her face.*]

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John! John!!

JOHN. My God, mother, what's wrong?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, John, John! . . .

JOHN (*going to her*). Mother, what's happened?

[GEORGE NORWOOD, *as distraught as* OLD MRS. THURLOW, *enters.* OLD MRS. THURLOW *sits down.*]

GEORGE NORWOOD. Oh, sir!

JOHN. What's happened! What in the name of God has happened?

GEORGE. The boat, sir . . . the "Magnificent!" . . .

JOHN. Yes. Yes! What about her? Why didn't you send me the wireless messages sooner?

GEORGE. She's gone down, sir!

JOHN. Gone down! My ship . . . my ship . . . *sunk!*

GEORGE. Yes, sir. That's why I couldn't send a message to you earlier. There weren't any from the ship. She struck an iceberg and went down in twenty minutes. We've just got the news from a rescuer. I came out at once! . . .

JOHN (*half-stunned*). My God! . . . My God, she's gone down . . . my ship! (*He looks about him in a dazed manner.*) Oh, no! No, no. No, no, no, NO! It's not true, it's *not* true! She couldn't sink. She was unsinkable! . . .

[JANET *comes in, and the expression on her face shows that she has heard the news.*]

JANET. John! John! . . .

JOHN (*rising and going to her*). It's not true, Janet. It can't be true.

GEORGE. It is true, sir. I wish to God it weren't.

JOHN. Oh, Janet, my ship!

JANET. John . . . my *son!*

JOHN. Jack! Jack? What—what's happened to Jack?

GEORGE. I think he's drowned, sir!

JOHN. Drowned!

[JANET, *sobbing, turns away from him and he stands, as if he were stunned, staring uncomprehendingly at* GEORGE. *Then he goes to* GEORGE *and touches him on the sleeve.*]

JOHN. My son! What did you say?

GEORGE. Oh, sir, he's been . . .

JOHN. Drowned! (*He sways a little and puts his hands to his eyes.*) Oh, my God! . . . my God!

[*He turns to* OLD MRS. THURLOW, *mumbling brokenly, and as she opens her arms to him, he falls heavily into them.*]

SCENE III

The scene is the same as that of the first act, several hours after the time of the second scene of this act. The room is quite dark. Presently the door opens, and JOHN THURLOW, *in his dressing-gown, enters. He switches on one of the lights, and then gazes about the room until he sees the model of the "Magnificent." He goes to it and, with an effort, lifts it from its place and carries it to the table in the centre of the room, where he puts it down. He stands looking at it for a few moments, and then, sighing heavily, goes to the long windows and pulls back the curtains, admitting the moonlight. He opens the windows and goes a little way into the garden, but not out of sight of the audience, where he remains for a while. Then he returns to the room, leaving the windows wide open, and sits down at the table where the model is.*

JOHN (*almost fondling the model*). What was wrong? *What* was wrong?

[*He listens, almost as if he expected the boat to answer. Then he gets up and goes out of the room. In a few seconds he returns, carrying a revolver, which he examines, when he has re-seated himself, to see whether it is loaded. Evidently he is satisfied, for he rises and stands in the attitude of a man taking farewell. He lifts the revolver and looks at it in a fascinated fashion, and then, with an effort, raises it towards his head. But before he can raise it far, he hears the sound of footsteps, and he stops to listen. Then he puts the revolver on the table and, going swiftly*

to the switch, turns off the light. He comes down again in the dark and stands in the shadow.

The door opens, and OLD MRS. THURLOW, *fully clothed, comes in. She stands in the doorway, through which a beam of light comes, and listens. Then she speaks.*]

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John! (*He does not answer.*) John!

[*She turns on the light and sees him.*

OLD MRS. THURLOW. What's the matter? Why didn't you answer?

JOHN. I want to be alone, mother. Why haven't you gone to bed? You're still dressed.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, dear, I'm still dressed. I've been with Janet. What are you doing, John?

JOHN. Thinking, mother!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You've moved the model.

JOHN. Yes. I . . . I wanted to look at it. I can't understand what went wrong. I think and think and think! . . . How's Janet?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. She's quieter now. Hester's sitting with her. Poor Janet.

JOHN. Yes . . . poor Janet! You heard what she said to me?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Oh, my dear, she didn't know what she was saying. (*She sits near him.*)

JOHN. She's right, mother. I killed Jack just as surely as if I'd stabbed him. I made him go against his will. I forced him to . . . to his death!

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*putting her arms about him and drawing him close to her*). You mustn't talk like that, John! Why, you're cold, dear! You're shivering! (*She looks across the room to the open windows.*) The windows are open. I'll go and shut them.

JOHN. I'm not cold.

[*He get up and moves away and as he does so, she sees the revolver lying on the table. She picks it up.*]

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*horrified*). JOHN!

JOHN (*turning to her*). What is it, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*holding out the revolver*). Oh, John, John! . . .

[*She sits down, the revolver still in her hand, unable to speak.*]

JOHN. Well, mother, I . . . oh, what's the use, mother? I've lost everything, my ship, my son! . . .

[*He sits down by the model, on the other side of the table, from her.*]

JOHN. You saw the last message George brought to-night?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes.

JOHN. Do you remember what was in it?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. About Jack?

JOHN. Yes. The message about the man who tried to get him to leave the boat. Jack said to him, "My father built this ship, and if he were here, he'd go down with her. I've taken his place, and I must do what he would wish." . . . Oh, my God, my God!

[*He is unable to proceed for a moment or two. Then he gets up and goes to the windows, and leans against one of them.*]

JOHN. It seems such a little while ago since he was here. Five days! And now he's dead, tossing about somewhere in the sea. . . . And I made him go. I wouldn't listen to him. . . . I wouldn't let him have his life. . . . I took it from him! . . . (*Coming back to* OLD MRS. THURLOW.) Oh, mother, what am I to do now? There's nothing left. All I've done is . . . useless now. I've failed. Great machines, eating up people's lives! That's what Jack said. I couldn't understand him! I thought he was foolish! . . . I've been wrong, mother! We've all been wrong. We've made men less than machines . . . that's what he said . . . and I made him less than my machine . . . the ship! . . . (*He rests his hands on the model.*) I wonder why we always hunt the young . . . hunt them! . .

OLD MRS. THURLOW. John, you've never yielded to anything, have you?

JOHN. No, mother, not if I could help it.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. But you're yielding now.

JOHN. Yielding?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes. You were wrong about Jack, but he was wrong about you. Oh, my dear, if you'd only met each other half-way. We old people won't let the young live until they're old, too, and then it's too late to live. We always behave as if we were right and the other people were wrong, but none of us are right and none of us are wrong. That's why we have to meet each other half-way. Jack and you wouldn't do that, John! . . .

JOHN. And I took his life from him.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, but you won't compensate him by taking your own life. You owe him more than that, John. You must pay him for your wrong with your right.

JOHN. How?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Go on with your work! That's right. He'd have known it was right if he'd lived. You've lost your ship, John. Well, build another one.

JOHN. I can't bring my son back to life.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. No, you can't do that. But you can pass on your work to the next Thurlow.

JOHN. The next Thurlow!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes. There'll soon be another Thurlow! I told you this morning about Hester! . .

JOHN (*almost in a whisper*). Hester!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. If Hester has a son, he will build ships like you. And you'll teach him how to build them, John?

JOHN. My grandson!

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You've got to keep Thurlow's where you put it until he is ready to take it from you. And we won't make the same mistake about him that

we made about Jack, will we? Come here, my dear! (*She draws him down so that he is kneeling beside her with his head on her shoulder.*) We haven't any right to run away, John. We must go on and face things! . . .

JOHN. You've more courage than any of us, mother. You're the real Thurlow — you always want to go on.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Well, it's better to go on, isn't it, than to go back? I don't know where we're going to, but we've got to go.

[*They are silent for a moment or two.*

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Won't you go to bed now JOHN? It's very late.

[*He rises to his feet.*

JOHN. Very well, mother.

OLD MRS. THURLOW. You won't leave me, John?

JOHN. Leave you, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes. You said I was the real Thurlow—always wanting to go on. I don't want to go alone, John. You won't leave me?

JOHN. No, mother.

OLD MRS. THURLOW (*handing the revolver to him*). Then will you please put this away somewhere and forget about it.

JOHN. You trust me, mother?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. Yes, dear.

JOHN (*kissing her*). Good-night. (*He goes towards the door and then turns to speak to her.*) Aren't you going to bed?

OLD MRS. THURLOW. In a little while. Good-night, dear.

JOHN. Good-night, mother!

[*He goes out, and she remains for a few moments in her seat, without stirring. Suddenly she yields to her tears, and for a moment or two, she abandons herself to grief. Then she recovers herself, and get up and goes to the open windows and shuts them. But she does not draw the curtains.*

She stands for a moment or two in the moonlight, looking into the garden. Then she crosses the room to where the switch is and turns out the light. She opens the door and goes out of the room, shutting the door behind her. There is quietness. The play ends.]

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